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Record Supplement

for

March, 1943

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C	Columbia	NMR	New Music Recordings
CM	Columbia Masterworks Set	P	Parlophone
CX	Columbia Two-Record Masterworks Set	PAR	Paraclete
D	Decca	PD	Polydor
G	Gramophone (HMV)	T	Telefunken
K	Keynote	TI	Timely
MC	Musicraft	V	Victor
		VM	Victor Masterpiece Set

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Vol. VI

Record Supplement for March, 1943

No. 3

BEETHOVEN (LUDWIG VAN)

BEETHOVEN: *Fidelio*—Gott! welch' Dunkel hier (recitative) & In des Lebens Frühlingstagen, Act II. René Maison (tenor), with orchestra conducted by Erich Leinsdorf. 12" record (2 sides) No. C-71410D; price \$1.05.

Florestan's recitative and aria from the second act of *Fidelio* together constitute one of the most rigorous and taxing efforts an operatic tenor can be required to make. They require, first of all, a voice of *Heldentenor* proportions, second a type of flexibility not usually associated with that type of tenor, and third true intellectual and emotional sympathy. When sung by a Florestan possessed of that rare combination, they make up one of the most deeply moving passages in all opera. They were thus performed — on a record now temporarily unavailable (PD-27311 or D-LY6113) by Franz Völker. They were sung with only a little less vocal prowess on another now unobtainable record (G-DB4522) by Helge Roswaenge. No domestic recording has been on the lists. It has for a long time been hoped that one of the recording companies would fill this gap.

Columbia now presents Florestan's recitative and aria as sung by the Metropolitan tenor René Maison. Mr. Maison produces (with obvious effort) the required volume, and has the essential insight. His voice, however, is so strained, so forced, and so pinched as to give his entire performance an atmosphere of rage and hysteria that would suit Othello better than Florestan. The sounds he makes, particularly

at climactic moments, are neither very appropriate nor very pleasant. Mr. Leinsdorf has supplied a run-of-the-mill accompaniment to a recording that sounds curiously hollow. The surfaces of this otherwise disappointing record are all that could be asked. A good domestic recording of Florestan's recitative and aria must still be awaited.

BLITZSTEIN: *No For an Answer*—The Purest Kind of a Guy, see Collections: Songs of Free Men.

DUBENSKY (ARCADY)

DUBENSKY: *Gossips* & **PROKOFIEV:** *The Love for Three Oranges*—March & **REGER:** *Ballet Suite—Waltz* (all arr. by Arthur Whittemore & Jack Lowe). Arthur Whittemore & Jack Lowe (two pianos). 10" record (2 sides) No. V-10-1041; price 79c.

Messrs. Whittemore and Lowe have admirable precision and an edgy brittleness of tone that well suits the Dubensky trifle and Prokofiev excerpt. They are less happy in the Reger Waltz, which they seem in too much of a hurry to play properly. They have been superbly recorded, and the sample record we heard had superior surfaces. It is perhaps worth noting that *Gossips* was composed in 1930 for string orchestra (it is so recorded, by the Philadelphia String Sinfonietta, conducted by Fabien Sevitzky, on V-4186), while the Reger excerpt is from his Opus 130 for orchestra. It is scarcely to be doubted that any one of these three small pieces is to be preferred in the instrumentation for which its composer conceived it.

DZERZHINSKY: *Quiet Flows the Don—From Border to Border & Oh, How Proud Our Quiet Don*, see Collections: *Songs of Free Men*.

ELGAR (SIR EDWARD)

ELGAR: *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1, Opus 39 and Londonderry Air (traditional)*. CBS Orchestra, conducted by Howard Barlow. 12" record (2 sides) No. C-71441D; price \$1.05.

The *Londonderry Air* (known also as *Would God I Were a Tender Apple Blossom* and *Danny Boy*) and the inescapable first of the *Elgar Pomp and Circumstance Marches*, Opus 39, are here given a good routine performance by the Columbia Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Howard Barlow. The recording is narrow as to range if compared with Columbia's Cleveland Orchestra (Severance Hall) recordings, but adequate to the music in hand. The surfaces would seem to be up to all but the very highest standards.

GLAZUNOV (ALEXANDER KONSTANTINOVICH)

GLAZUNOV: *Concert Waltz, F, Opus 51 & Concert Waltz, D, Opus 47*. Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Frederick Stock. Two 12" records (4 sides) in Set CX-232†; price complete with album \$2.62.

The descriptive matter on the inside cover of CX-232† begins by referring to Glazunov as "the last great representative of the nationalist school of Russian composers fathered by Balakirev," and ends by explaining the recent neglect of Glazunov's music as having been caused by "its definitely 19th Century character, its lack of venturesomeness, of high originality. . . ." It is impossible that both of these remarks can be applied accurately to one man. And, indeed, the second one fits Glazunov perfectly, while the first is inaccurate in every respect. Scarcely anyone has ever claimed that he was "great," and surely he did not represent "the nationalist school." He was a westernizer always, and could be far more accurately described as an inferior Arensky, a purveyor of thin echoes of Tchaikovsky.

The late Dr. Frederick Stock had an unaccountable fondness for Glazunov's unventuresome and consistently unoriginal music, and played it better than it deserves. The two concert waltzes on this record are rather treacly salon music, but they are lifted to something approaching interest by the infectious sincerity and care with which Stock directed them. The Chicago Symphony men responded well to his leadership. For as long as it is possible to concentrate on music so lacking in profile, the recording appears to be faithful. It is to be hoped that Dr. Stock, an admirable if not electric musician, will be remembered by things more worthy of his considerable artistry than Glazunov's imitative and watery concert waltzes.

MESSAGER (ANDRE)

MESSAGER: *Véronique* — (a) *Petite Dinde*, Ah! quel outrage, (b) *Ma foi! Pour venir de Provence & OFFENBACH: La Périchole* — Tu n'est pas beau, tu n'est pas riche. Maggie Teyte (soprano), with orchestra. 12" record (2 sides) No. D-29008; price \$1.05.

We are very fortunate in having been able to obtain again a small supply of Maggie Teyte's remarkable record of selections from Messager's *Véronique* and Offenbach's *La Périchole*. *La Périchole* (1868) is interesting because, exactly like *Carmen*, it has a libretto by Meilhac and Halévy based on an original work by Prosper Mérimée. This was a one-act play, *Le Carrosse du Saint-Sacrement*, dealing with the legendary Peruvian actress known as La Perichole. It is an *opéra bouffe*. *Véronique*, once enormously popular in France, England, and the United States, is an *opéra-comique*, or operetta, and was first presented in Paris in 1898. Its composer, André Messager, had then lived but forty-five of his seventy-three years, during which — in addition to composing a whole repertoire of light opera and ballet — he conducted the world première of *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Both *Véronique* and *La Périchole* contain considerable music of enduring charm.

Maggie Teyte does not make the common error of condescending to music of this sort. She sings it with the same care and subtle artistry she would apply to Debussy or

Berlioz. The result, given her emotionally stirring voice, must be exactly that of which the composers dreamed, but which it is unlikely they ever heard (though Messager, who died in 1929, may have heard Miss Teyte herself). In the rapid passages from *Véronique*, her vocal control is as certain and apparently effortless as always. But it is in *Tu n'est pas beau, tu n'est pas riche* that she works her most potent enchantments. Here, altogether, is one of the pre-eminent treasures of the gramophone in the field of what can, in this case, truly be called entertainment music. The recording shows no signs of age, and the surfaces are entirely adequate. The supply of D-29008 is limited, and we recommend it in the full realization that we shall soon again be reporting it Out of Stock.

OFFENBACH: *La Périchole* — *Tu n'est pas beau, tu n'est pas riche*, see **MESSAGER:** *Véronique*.

PROKOFIEV: *The Love for Three Oranges—March*, see **DUBENSKY:** *Gossips*.

RAVEL (MAURICE)

RAVEL: *Alborada del Gracioso* (from *Miroirs*). Cleveland Orchestra, conducted by Artur Rodzinski. 12" record (2 sides) No. C-11910D; price \$1.05.

Dr. Rodzinski and the members of the excellent Cleveland Orchestra approach Ravel's own transcription of his piano piece *Alborada del Gracioso* (from *Miroirs*) in exactly the proper spirit. Regarding it as a subtle, atmospheric display piece for orchestra, they give it the virtuoso performance that alone reveals its entire brilliance. Here is nothing profound or heavy, but the very sardonic gayety promised by the title (which might be translated *Morning Song of a Dandy*). The graduations of color and volume, the sudden, dizzy shifts in timbre — all are realized in the performance and wonderfully caught in the recording. Unless you demand that music always be serious and deal with the inescapable problems of humanity, here is something that will delight you. The sample record listened to had superior, unflawed surfaces.

REGER: *Ballet Suite—Waltz*, see **DUBENSKY:** *Gossips*.

SCHUBERT (FRANZ PETER)

SCHUBERT: *Sonata for Arpeggione and Piano, A minor* (arr. by Watson Forbes for viola and piano). Watson Forbes (viola) and Myers Foggin (piano). Two 12" imported records (4 sides) Nos. D-K955/6; price \$3.14.

In Vienna, in 1823, a man named Georg Stauffer invented an instrument that, while not destined to endure among the living, had a short vogue among composers, publishers, and performers. It had the shape of a large guitar, was about one size smaller than a cello, had six strings tuned fourths apart (except that there was a major third between strings two and three), and was fretted. This arpeggione, guitar-violoncello, bow-guitar, or *guitarre d'amour* was held between the knees like a cello, and was played with a bow. In 1825, Anton Diabelli, remembered as the publisher for whom Beethoven composed his gigantic variations, published a "method" for the arpeggione, the work of one Vinc. Schuster. It was Professor Schuster for whom, in 1824, Schubert had composed his *Sonata in A minor*. As an example of the arpeggione would undoubtedly be hard to come by — and a good performer on that singular instrument still harder to find — modern listeners hear the *Sonata* only in transcriptions. There have been at least two for cello and piano, one unidentified and one by Gaspar Cassadó, in addition to the present one for viola and piano by Watson Forbes.

The *Sonata in A minor* is simple, unpretentious, and exceedingly winning music. Each of its three movements is dotted with typically Schubertian touches of imagination, and the final *allegretto* abounds in them. Mr. Forbes and Mr. Foggin address the music directly and play it exceedingly well. The tones of both viola and piano have been faithfully preserved in excellent recording, and the surfaces are of English Decca's very highest standards. We have a small stock of these two records remaining on hand, and relist them now to call them to the attention of lovers of Schubert and of music a little off the well-trod highways.

SCHUMANN (ROBERT)

SCHUMANN: Quintet, E flat, Opus 44. Busch Quartet and Rudolf Serkin (piano). Four 12" records (8 sides) in Set CM-533†; price complete with album \$4.72.

The E flat major Quintet, far and away the most popular of Schumann's chamber works, has been recorded at least five times. The earliest set (VM-28, discontinued) was in many respects the best, though today its antiquated recording would rule it out. The Flonzaley Quartet and Ossip Gabrilowitsch, lacking no iota of technical accomplishment, suffused their reading with the best poetry of mid-nineteenth century Teutonic romanticism. Then came a Columbia set (CM-192, discontinued) that seems to have lacked conspicuous virtues, despite the quartet's having been the Léner — the pianist was Olga Loeser-Leber. Third appeared VM-267 (discontinued), with Artur Schnabel and the Pro Arte Quartet. This set was for long accepted as the standard recorded version, despite Schnabel's patent technical deficiencies and inability to abandon himself fully to Schumannesque romanticism. The discontinuing of VM-267 left but one version of the Quintet on the market. This was VM-736†, played by the Primrose Quartet and Jesus Maria Sanromá. Mr. Sanromá crackled brilliantly in the rapid passages, but failed utterly to project the intimate warmth of the slow ones, while the Primrose Quartet manifested too clearly its lack of shared experience. The field was wide open for a definitive recording of one of the most persistently loved of all chamber works.

That definitive recording of the E flat Quintet is now at hand. Rudolf Serkin and the Busch Quartet give us something as good as a modern recording of the Flonzaleys and Gabrilowitsch. This high praise is not loosely spoken: their conception and its carrying-out are alike magisterial. When dreamy meditation is called for, they meditate dreamily, but do not skirt bathos. When brilliance is in the score, they produce it without strain. (Listen, for example, to side 6.) Theirs is musicianship of the very highest kind. Without wishing to carp, we cannot avoid regretting that side 4 was not rejected and re-recorded. In the held chord that closes this second movement there is either faulty bowing or a flaw in the recording, with the result that one of the held notes seems to break off and begin. That aside, here is an album to rank with the Heifetz-Feuermann-Rubinstein Schubert B flat Trio (VM-923†) and the Budapest Quartet-Milton Katims Mozart G minor Quintet (CM-526†).

SIBELIUS (JEAN)

SIBELIUS: Symphony No. 7, C, Opus 105 & Pelleas and Melisande, Opus 46—Melisande. Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Three 12" records (6 sides) in Set CM-524†; price complete with album \$3.67.

In the February SUPPLEMENT, we reviewed the new Victor recording of Sibelius' *Seventh Symphony*, by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Vladimir Golschmann. After comparing it with the only earlier recording (Koussevitzky with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, in VM-394†), we placed it second. Only one month later there appears a recording of a performance so superb in all details that it at once usurps first place among available versions of the *Seventh*. Whatever the faults in the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra (that it has them is not to be denied), they fail to put in their appearance in CM-524†. Under the galvanic leadership of Sir Thomas Beecham, the New York orchestra has made far and away the finest of its recent recordings.

Something more than one year ago, New York was given its first opportunity to hear what Beecham could do by way of miracle-working with a less than first-rate orchestra. One of the high spots in that memorable series of concerts was, unexpectedly, the Sibelius *Seventh*. Sir Thomas demonstrated that this one-movement work is persuasive and living music when played with the requisite vitality and molding. What Columbia has done is to place Beecham at the head of a far superior orchestra to the one he conducted in Carnegie Hall, and thus capture his superb reading of the *Seventh* at its optimum. To fill out the odd sixth side, Beecham has conducted one of the nine pieces of incidental music Sibelius composed in 1905 for a staging of Maeterlinck's *Pelleas and Melisande*. Captioned *Melisande*, this is music in the mood of that heroine's remote and gentle personality, quiet music of enduring charm.

The engineers have well caught the nuances of Beecham's performance as carried out by the members of the Philharmonic-Symphony. Again the record surfaces on the samples listened to were excellent. Put CM-524† on any list of candidates for choice as the most distinguished album of 1943. It is of heart-warming excellence in every department.

NOTE. We wish to thank the many subscribers to the SUPPLEMENT who have written in to point out that our review, in the February issue, of CM-532† — Sibelius' *First Symphony*, with the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, conducted by John Barbirolli — failed to take into account the recent Victor recording of the same work. We have now compared VM-881† (the *First*, with the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Eugene Ormandy) with CM-532†, and find no reason to revise our former statement that the Barbirolli "is the best version now on the market." Mr. Ormandy still plays the *First* far too rapidly. He covers the ground in four 12" records, though a careful comparison with the score does not show that he makes any cuts. Mr. Barbirolli's far better tempo requires five 12" records. Certain individual excellences among performers unquestionably favor the Philadelphia Orchestra set, but all the other factors favor CM-532†.

STEINER (MAX)

STEINER: *Symphonie Moderne*, on a theme by Max Rabinowitsch (from Warner Brothers film *Four Wives*). Janssen Symphony of Los Angeles, conducted by Werner Janssen. 12" record (2 sides) No. V-11-8311; price \$1.05.

In future histories of music, a place will have to be found for a style that might be called "Hollywood expansive." Responsibility for it will probably be divided between Paul Whiteman, Ferde Grofé, André Kostelanetz, and Warner Brothers. It is harmless, and would be altogether dull but for its gigantic pretentiousness. It makes the gestures of great music against a background of mindless vacuity. Mr. Steiner's *Symphonie Moderne* (why not *Modern Symphony*?) is a full-blown example of the style. As recorded, it is some nine minutes of music in which nothing but slick orchestration happens, music that it is impossible to remain interested in or remember for one ninth its duration. Mr. Janssen, who should perhaps leave Hollywood before it is too late to salvage his appreciable talents, plays it slickly. In these days of acute shellac shortage, *Symphonie Moderne* could surely (like *Warsaw Concerto*) have been condensed into one side of a 52c popular record, supposing that there were any audible demand that it be recorded at all.

STRAVINSKY (IGOR)

STRAVINSKY: *The Fire Bird* & TCHAIKOVSKY: *Humoresque*, Opus 10, No. 2 (arr. Stokowski). NBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Leopold Stokowski. Three 12" records (6 sides) in Set VM-933†; price complete with album \$3.67.

The old sorcerer has not broken his wand or drowned his books. Those of us who had suffered at the spectacle of Stokowski's apparent disintegration through a long series of unbelievably inferior recordings, mostly of unwelcome and unwanted arrangements, may now take heart. Whatever his vagaries, this man is one of the sovereign orchestral conductors of our time. When the music in hand is matched in high quality by the orchestra, and when Stokowski is in the vein, the results are as likely to be electrifying in 1943 as they were in 1923. Here the music is Stravinsky not far from his peak, the orchestra the NBC Symphony. The conductor, at least on this occasion, is the superb musician to whose magnificent readings of his works Igor Stravinsky owes a large part of his American renown.

In few recordings has the NBC Symphony sounded as golden and vital as in this one. The masterly playing of many of its individual musicians is scarcely to be matched, and here at least its ensemble is perfect. Modulating, molding, and subtilizing to the exactly apt degree, Stokowski has drawn from his many-voiced instrument precisely the qualities *The Fire Bird* demands. The recording is acoustically round, full-bodied, and realistic. Nothing is done for mere surface effect except where mere surface effect is the very nature of the music itself. Except for the inexplicable omission of passages to be heard only in the Stravinsky recording (CM-115), this is as definitive a recorded version of *The Fire Bird* as Victor's M-574† (Stokowski with the Philadelphia Orchestra) is of *Petrouchka*.

As if to say that he has not reformed completely, Stokowski has filled out the odd sixth side of VM-933† with his own "freely transcribed" version of the unoffending little Tchaikovsky *Humoresque* for piano, Opus 10, No. 2. It would be hard indeed to find one word to say in favor of this maltreatment of a charming trifle whose tenuous hold on life depends entirely on its exploitation of the piano's ability to produce staccato.

The new Stokowski *Fire Bird* is contemporary recording at its best.

CO-ART RECORDS

The following is a list of the CO-ART records we have on hand. The sets come in heavy blue craft envelopes. The Ellen Beach Yaw and Lillian Steuber records are autographed. As to the best of our knowledge these records have been discontinued, this is probably a last chance to obtain these curious, out-of-the-way selections. We relist them in response to several requests.

Achron, Joseph: Statuettes, Opus 66. Lillian Steuber (piano). Two 10" records (3 sides, 4th side blank) Nos. CO-ART 5032/3; price \$2.10.

Cadman, Charles Wakefield: Dark Dancers of the Mardi Gras. Charles Wakefield Cadman and Marguerite Bitter (two pianos). 12" record (2 sides) No. CO-ART 5023; price \$1.32.

Lange, Arthur: The Fisherman and His Soul—Four Symphonic Murals for Chamber Orchestra. Compinsky Chamber Orchestra. Three 12" records (6 sides) Nos. CO-ART 5034/6 (automatic coupling); price \$3.20.

Stahl, Willy: Three Trees (Prelude, Cypress, Willow, Oak). Compinsky Trio. 12" record (2 sides) No. CO-ART 5015; price \$1.57.

Thomas, Ambroise: Hamlet—Ophelia's Mad Scene. Ellen Beach Yaw (soprano) and Mme. Stefani Dvorak Worthing (piano). 12" record (limited, numbered edition) No. CO-ART 5025; price \$2.00.

Tremblay, George: Dance and Prelude. John Crown (piano). 10" record (2 sides) No. CO-ART 5014; price \$1.32.

Tremblay, George: Modes of Transportation (The Mayflower, The Covered Wagon, The Iron Horse). McCarthy-Peet String Quartet. Two 10" records Nos. CO-ART 5021/2 (automatic coupling); price \$2.62.

Vaughan, Clifford: Oriental Translations (Singhalese Mask Dance, White Jade, Hindu Temple, Hindu Nautch, Singhalese Anklet Dance, Chinese Theatre). Vaughan Ensemble. Three 10" records (6 sides) Nos. CO-ART 5011/3; price \$3.93.

COLLECTIONS

FLAMENCO (Songs of Andalusia). La Niña Valiente (soprano) and Jirónimo Villarino (guitar). Three 10" records (6 sides) in Set K-112; price complete with album \$2.89.

The songs in this collection are: *Fandangillos*, *Malagueñas*, *Medias Granadinas*, *Bulerías*, *Por Fandangos*, and *Ana Maria*. All are in the melismatic style known as *cante andaluz* or *cante hondo*. La Niña Valiente performs them with the properly seductive flourish, and is subtly and supplely accompanied by the guitar of Sr. Villarino. The recording is lifelike, the general level of the surfaces high.

GLADYS SWARTHOUT IN MUSICAL SHOW HITS. Gladys Swarthout (mezzo soprano), with Victor Concert Orchestra. Four 10" records (8 sides) in Set VM-935; price complete with album \$3.67.

This album contains the following:

Berlin: Jubilee—Begin the Beguine

Berlin: Louisiana Purchase—It's a Lovely Day Tomorrow

Kern: Roberta—Smoke Gets in Your Eyes (When Your Heart's on Fire)

Youmans: Through the Years—Through the Years
Schwartz: The Band Wagon—Dancing in the Dark

Friml: The White Eagle—Give Me One Hour
Gershwin: Strike Up the Band—The Man I Love
Rodgers: A Connecticut Yankee—My Heart Stood Still

This album has resulted from Miss Swarthout's continuing success on the weekly Sunday broadcast known as the Prudential Family Hour. That program has consisted of a few jokes, a smattering of comment by Deems Taylor, lush arrangements played by Al Goodman's Orchestra, and varied singing. Miss Swarthout's contributions to it have included operatic arias and concert songs, but have been notable for clinching her fame as a singer of popular songs. It is the popular songs that make up her new album.

Miss Swarthout's voice is always a pleasure to hear, particularly in its lower register. She sings without objectionable mannerisms, and has the grace to recognize that texts have a meaning. The unevenness of scale that was so noticeably peculiar a feature of her singing a few years ago has now all but disappeared. If what you demand from an album of old favorites among popular songs is that it present the tunes and make the words understandable, then VM-935 will please you. The choice of selections sung is admirable, the recording clear, the surfaces smooth and unblemished.

Several objections, however, may validly be entered against VM-935. The arrangements for orchestra, first of all, suffer insistently from oleaginous harmonies and instrumentation. All is slick, all is rich, nothing has any bite or sharpness. Then there is the matter of rhythm and tempo. With the possible exceptions of the Youmans and Friml numbers, all the songs in this album were either conceived as having the unrelenting, unchanging rhythm of American dance music, or have become loved through being performed that way. An American composer of popular songs may display as much ingenuity as he can muster in rhythmic decoration, but he must hold to the steady underlying beat and tempo. To hear *Begin the Beguine*, for example, with one phrase in one tempo, another in a slower or faster one, is to hear its essential character destroyed. For this reason, many

singers with less than a quarter of Miss Swarthout's talent have sung most of these songs to more effect. Not driven by any wish to make their material over into something more than its potentialities allow, singing it exactly in the popular vein, they have done it better justice than these balladized, overdressed versions could.

These demurrers aside, VM-935 is a highly welcome addition to the lists.

ORATORIO ARIAS SUNG BY RICHARD CROOKS. Richard Crooks (tenor), with Victor Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Charles O'Connell. Three 12" records (6 sides) in Set VM-934; price complete with album \$3.67.

This album contains the following:

Handel: Messiah—Comfort ye, my people

Handel: Samson—Total eclipse

Handel: Judas Maccabaeus—Sound an alarm

Mendelssohn: St. Paul—Be thou faithful unto death

Mendelssohn: Elijah—If with all your hearts

Mendelssohn: Elijah—Then shall the righteous shine.

It is difficult, indeed it is impossible, to believe that the Richard Crooks of these records is the Richard Crooks of the opera stage. That enormously wide divergence in quality is the result of talent beautifully applied in one case and miscast in the other. Everything about Mr. Crooks—his voice, his intelligence, his personality—is excellent for oratorio. It is to be doubted that another tenor now on the American scene could produce a record album containing six sides of Handel and Mendelssohn oratorio with half the exciting excellence of this one. The chief emotion VM-934 arouses in one listener, at least, is regret that fashion hereabouts long ago set against oratorio, with the result that, though performances of *Messiah* are annual, performances of *Samson*, *Judas Maccabaeus*, *St. Paul*, and *Elijah*—not to mention *Israel in Egypt*, *Hercules*, and a half dozen other Handelian masterpieces—are very rare.

Mr. Crooks, despite one or two moments of strain, was in excellent voice when these recordings were made. He was well and discreetly accompanied, and recorded with lifelike fidelity. It is in the matters of artistic intelligence and sensitivity to style, however, that these recordings are most cherishable. Each selection is approached in its own way, each projected in the most appropriate manner. Listen, for example, to the difference between Mr. Crooks' singing of *Sound an alarm* and that of *Be thou faithful unto death*. One is dramatic—one is tempted to say hair-raising—the other meditative and suppliant. Nor is it the musical style

only that is subtly altered. Mr. Crooks understands the English language as both sound and sense. This is not a question of pronunciation or enunciation, but of inherent meaning and accent.

In a field poorly covered by current recordings, VM-934 is a uniquely valuable newcomer. It is superbly achieved in every department.

SONGS OF FREE MEN. Paul Robeson (baritone) and Lawrence Brown (piano). Four 10" records (8 sides) in Set CM-534; price complete with album \$3.67.

There are two distinctly separate ways of approaching the eight selections in this album. One is powerfully suggested by the title of the album itself, and by the design on its cover—an arm from which chains are falling, the hand holding a dagger stuck through a snake marked with a swastika. The texts of the songs, clearly pronounced and enunciated by Mr. Robeson in English, Russian, German, and Spanish, exemplify both title and design. Not the most politically conservative could find them objectionable, but it would take a proud author to find them poetically distinguished. The good will behind their meaning and behind Mr. Robeson's projection of them is beyond question. They merely happen, for the most part, to be drearily dull.

The selections in **SONGS OF FREE MEN** are:

From Border to Border (from Ivan Dzerzhinsky's opera *Quiet Flows the Don*)

Oh, How Proud Our Quiet Don (from Ivan Dzerzhinsky's opera *Quiet Flows the Don*)

The Purest Kind of a Guy (from Marc Blitzstein's opera *No For an Answer*)

Joe Hill (Earl Robinson)

The Peet-Bog Soldiers (German concentration camp song)

The Four Insurgent Generals (Spanish loyalist song)

Song of the Plains (Red Army song)

Native Land (Donayevsky)

The other way to approach these selections is to emphasize the word *Songs* in the title, and to examine their music. The excerpts from Ivan Dzerzhinsky's Soviet opera *Quiet Flows the Don* are appallingly banal, as are *Joe Hill*, *The Peet-Bog Soldiers*, and *Native Land*. *The Purest Kind of a Guy* again demonstrates the point with which Blitzstein can adapt jazz techniques to serious purposes. But the only two songs herein that are of inherent musical interest are *The Four Insurgent Generals* (the English text of which seems to express exactly the opposite of the meaning intended) and *Song of the Plains*, both of which are lively and colorful. The latter is not so exhilarating here as in the

version sung by the Choir of the Red Army (C-4204, or C-36265 in C-68), but not even Mr. Robeson's uninflected singing quite stills its pulse. He is at his best in *The Four Insurgent Generals*. His voice is, as always, a beautiful one, but he continues to sing with the minimum of communicative expressiveness. He has been expertly accompanied by Lawrence Brown and well recorded. Columbia has awarded this set some of its best surfaces. Put CM-534 down as spotty, interesting, and not altogether successful.

SPIRITUALS

Let Us Break Bread Together (Negro Spiritual) & Oh! What a Beautiful City (both arr. by Edward Boatner). Marian Anderson (contralto) & Franz Rupp (piano). 10" record (2 sides) No. V-10-1040; price 79c.

Here are two melodically attractive spirituals persuasively sung by Marian Anderson. The arrangements are admirable in their simplicity, but both linger too much in the upper register to display the most characteristic tones Miss Anderson can produce. She has been excellently accompanied by Franz Rupp, recorded with wide fidelity, and awarded adequate surfaces.

FOLK MUSIC

We have the following KISMET records in stock. All were arranged and performed under the direction of Dimitri Kornienko, who is familiar with these types of music through having lived many years in the countries to which they are native. The recordings are clear, the surfaces adequate. Each sells for 79c. Here is a group of recordings of unusual interest to all who care for Turkish, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, and Russian Gypsy popular music of authentic origin.

KIS-A101 Two-Step (Karapet) & Kohanochka (polka), performed by the Dimitri Kornienko Ensemble; 10" record (2 sides); price 79c. (Russian and Polish)

KIS-A102 Gazel (Lover's Complaint) & Gurbet, performed by Dimitri Kornienko Ensemble, with singing by Arif Vedjdi; 10" record (2 sides); price 79c. (Turkish)

KIS-A103 Moonlight Serenade & Korsetka, performed by Dimitri Kornienko Ensemble, with singing by Kolia Negin; 10" record (2 sides); price 79c. (Russian Gypsy)

KIS-A104 Koketka (polka) & Troika (Three Horses), performed by Dimitri Kornienko Ensemble; 10" record (2 sides); price 79c. (Russian)

KIS-A105 Krakowiak (dance) & Victory (polka), performed by Dimitri Kornienko, with singing on second side by Greg. Mathews; 10" record (2 sides); price 79c.

KIS-A106 Hopak (Cossack Dance) & Korobuchka (dance), performed by Dimitri Kornienko Ensemble; 10" record (2 sides); price 79c. (Russian)

KIS-A107 Grechaniki (Cossack Dance) & Vengerka (dance), performed by Dimitri Kornienko Ensemble; 10" record (2 sides); price 79c. (Ukrainian and Russian)

KIS-A108 Broken Strings (waltz) & Tsiganka (Gypsy), performed by Dimitri Kornienko Ensemble; 10" record (2 sides); price 79c. (Russian)

KIS-A109 Pa-de-Spain & Ball Lezginka, performed by Dimitri Kornienko Trio; 10" record (2 sides); price 79c.

KIS-A111 Spit-Fire (polka) & War Marriage (polka), performed by Dimitri Kornienko Orchestra and Trio; 10" record (2 sides); price 79c.

FOLK SONGS OF THE U.S.S.R. Chorus and orchestra conducted by H. Donayevsky, Lala Chornaya accompanied by two guitars, orchestra conducted by S. Chernetzky, & Pyatnitzky Chorus. Four 10" records (8 sides) in Set K-110; price complete with album \$2.62.

The songs in this album are:

Stallions of Steel (Donayevsky)

Harvest Song (from Donayevsky's film score for *The Rich Bride*)

In the Vineyard (Gypsy song)

The Wanderer (Gypsy song)

Red Moscow (D. Pokrass)

Sport March (Donayevsky)

The Ducks Are Flying (Russian song)

Golden Sands (L. Schwartz)

As may be seen from this list, only one of the numbers — *The Ducks Are Flying* — is a Russian folk song, though the two Gypsy selections may truly be called folk songs of the U.S.S.R. The other five numbers, whatever their folk quality, are clearly not covered properly by the album title, as their individual composers are not only known, but listed. The renditions are vital and interesting, the recordings of medium quality. What this album may truly be is a partial cross section of the popular music of the Soviet Union. As such, it is of great interest. The record surfaces are adequate.

WALTER GIESEKING ON RECORDS

An amusing if bootless musical pastime is the nominating of favorites for the imaginary position of "greatest" living pianist, or violinist, or conductor. A few minutes of cool thought would, perhaps, convince any of us that it is unlikely that any one person excels every other living person in the performance of all types of music. That a conductor, let us say, who excels in Richard Strauss and Tchaikovsky is not the ideal conductor of Mozart should not be surprising. His being equally at home, equally able to deploy his talents, in both types of music would be the astonishing thing. That a pianist who plays Chopin superbly does not distill the full essence of magic from Scarlatti or Debussy is scarcely cause for complaint or amazed comment. Personal tendencies, intimate preferences, and peculiar insights are bound to exercise more influence in one style of music than in another. Yet all of us enjoy the game of "greatest." It may be assumed that any interpreter whose name leaps to the minds and lips of musical people when the game is under way has unique and commanding quality. One pianist whose name is always a counter in such play is Walter Giesecking.

Almost everyone grants Giesecking's supremacy in Debussy, Ravel, the lighter Bach, and Scarlatti. There are some (to misparaphrase a witticism by Virgil Thomson) who feel that Giesecking plays Ravel and Debussy better than anyone else plays anything else — a feeling it is not difficult to share while listening to his *Gaspard de la nuit* or Debussy *Préludes*. Here he has no dangerous rival. In Mozart and Beethoven concertos and sonatas, the pianistic and psychological qualities that make Giesecking's playing unique are equally fruitful. Only in the music of high romanticism — of which he plays comparatively little — does he clearly have, not rivals merely, but unquestionable superiors. (His Chopin has never been considered definitive, and it is with a shock of surprise that one realizes how well he does the Liszt *Concerto No. 1* or the Franck *Variations symphoniques*.)

Giesecking starts out with one inestimable and essential advantage — a gigantic and subtly modulated technique. To this he adds vigorous and spacious intellectual grasp. He seems always to conceive of compositions as wholes. His interpretations have design and plan, with the result that individual passages are played in a certain manner because that is the way they best contribute to the larger, over-all effect at which the composer aimed. These are the essential qualities of all masterly performance. The special virtue of Giesecking's pianism is in his marvelous concentration on the exact quantity and sound of individual notes and chords, his almost frightening ability to conceive and perform every single note with its own dynamic and agogic value. He can move instantly from fortissimo to pianissimo in the middle of a rapid and difficult passage. Moreover, while doing so he can simultaneously change the color of his tone. Listen to Scarbo in his *Gaspard de la nuit* (in some ways the most remarkable of all piano recordings), his *Pagodes*, his Bach *Partita No. 6*, his Beethoven *Concerto No. 4*, and you will hear one sort of playing accomplished better than any other living pianist can accomplish it. Hope that the day will come when his Scarlatti can be added to his already long list of recordings. Listen to almost any one of his recordings, and you will hear magnificently and profoundly conceived interpretations transformed into living sound by a technique unmatched in its hair-trigger control. He is one of those few artists who set the standards by which other artists are judged.

THE GIESEKING RECORDINGS

BACH

Gigue (French Suite No. 5, G). 10" record No. C-17150D (Bach-Hess: *Jesu, Joy of Man's Destr-ing*); price 79c.

Gigue (Partita No. 1, B flat). One-half 12" record No. C-69533D, in Beethoven: *Concerto No. 5, E flat* ("Emperor"). Opus 73, for piano and orchestra, Set CM-243†.

Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring (arr. Myra Hess). 10" record No. C-17150D (*Gigue, French Suite No. 5, G*); price 79c.

Menuets Nos. 1 & 2 (*Partita No. 1, B flat*). One-half 12" record No. C-69533D, in *Beethoven: Concerto No. 5, E flat ("Emperor")*, Opus 73, for piano and orchestra, Set CM-243†.

Partita No. 5, G. Two 12" records (4 sides), in Set CX-208†; price complete with album \$2.62.

Partita No. 6, E minor. Two 12" records (4 sides), in Set CX-135†; price complete with album \$2.62.

BEETHOVEN

Bagatelle, E flat, Opus 33, No. 1. One 12" side in *Sonata No. 21, C ("Waldstein")*, Opus 53, Set CM-358†.

Concerto No. 1, C, Opus 15, for piano and orchestra. With Berlin State Opera Orchestra, conducted by Hans Rosbaud. Four 12" records (8 sides), in Set CM-308†; price complete with album \$4.72.

Concerto No. 4, G, Opus 58, for piano and orchestra. With Saxon State Orchestra, conducted by Karl Böhm. Four 12" records (8 sides), in Set CM-411†; price complete with album \$4.72.

Concerto No. 5, E flat ("Emperor"), Opus 73, for piano and orchestra. With Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Bruno Walter. Five 12" records (9 sides — for tenth side, see *Bach: Gigue & Menuets from Partita No. 1*), in Set CM-243†; price complete with album \$5.77.

Sonata No. 17, D minor ("Tempest"), Opus 31, No. 2. Two 12" records (4 sides), in Set CX-39†; price complete with album \$2.62.

Sonata No. 21, C ("Waldstein"), Opus 53. Three 12" records (5 sides — for sixth side, see *Bagatelle, E flat, Opus 33, No. 1*), in Set CM-358†; price complete with album \$3.67.

Sonata No. 23, F minor ("Appassionata"), Opus 57. Three 12" records (6 sides), in Set CM-365†; price complete with album \$3.67.

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CHOPIN

Barcarolle, F sharp, Opus 60. 12" record (2 sides), No. C-71026D; price \$1.05.

Prelude, F, Opus 28, No. 23. One-half side (with *Waltz, D flat, Opus 64, No. 1*) of 10" record No. C-17079D (*Brahms: Intermezzo, C, Opus 119, No. 3, & Schubert: Moment Musical, F minor, Opus 94, No. 3*); price 79c.

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Piano Music of Debussy (Children's Corner; Suite Bergamasque, *La soirée dans Grenade*; *Reflets dans l'eau*; *La Cathédrale engloutie*). Two 10" records (4 sides) & four 12" records (8 sides), in Set CM-314; price complete with album \$6.30.

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Réverie. 10" record No. C-17138D (Strauss-Gieseking: *Ständchen*); price 79c.

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Suite bergamasque (Prelude, Menuet, Clair de lune, Passepied). Two 12" records (4 sides), in Set CX-8; price complete with album \$2.62. (Also included in *Piano Music of Debussy*, Set CM-314.)

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Französische Serenade, Opus 62, No. 3. One-half side (with *An der Wiege*) of 12" record No. C-69090D (in *Concerto, A minor*, for piano and orchestra, Set CM-313†).

HANDEL

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